United Nations E/CN.9/1999/PC/5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 May 1999

Original: English

Commission on Population and Development acting as preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development
24 March–1 April 1999
Agenda item 3
Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly

Letter dated 26 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of The Hague Declaration of Parliamentarians on the International Conference on Population and Development Review issued by the International Forum of Parliamentarians on the International Conference on Population and Development Review at their meeting held at The Hague, the Netherlands, from 4 to 6 February 1999 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Commission on Population and Development acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

(*Signed*) Yukio **Satoh**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Japan
to the United Nations

99-12703 (E) 040599

Annex

The Hague Declaration of Parliamentarians on the International Conference on Population and Development Review

I. The Preamble

We, the 210 Parliamentarians from 103 countries meeting in The Hague, the Netherlands, 4-6 February 1999, at the International Forum of Parliamentarians on ICPD Review to discuss the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, on the eve of The Hague International Forum, issue the following Declaration:

1. We reaffirm the ICPD Programme of Action, its Principles and its relationship to food security, environmental and economic issues and to reproductive health and reproductive rights. We also reaffirm the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development that parliamentarians adopted at Cairo on the eve of the ICPD. We welcome The Hague Forum, which will engage in a five-year review of the Programme of Action by assessing the progress made to date, examining the obstacles encountered and producing a set of practical actions to implement effectively and expeditiously the recommendations of the Programme of Action.

2. We continue to urge Governments to implement the recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action working in partnership with members of civil society.

3. We urge that population and reproductive health issues be placed high on the agenda in the meetings of Heads of State at both regional and global levels.

4. We acknowledge that some progress has been made in implementing key areas of the ICPD Programme of Action through policy reformulation, programme redesign, increased partnerships and collaboration and increased resource allocation; however, many challenges still remain.

II. Priority Actions

(a) Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

5. The ICPD marked a critical paradigm shift from a focus on demographic targets to a clear focus on quality reproductive health care for individuals throughout the life cycle. At the ICPD, the international community agreed that all countries should strive to make reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, information and services accessible to all individuals of appropriate ages through the primary health-care system as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015. The ICPD recognized the importance of providing sex education for adolescents. The Programme of Action also underscores the importance of recognizing reproductive rights, including the promotion of the responsible exercise of these rights in all Government- and community-supported policies

and programmes in the area of reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health.

6. Recognizing that considerable progress has been made in some areas of reproductive rights and reproductive health, we acknowledge that many obstacles still remain: a high number of avoidable maternal deaths and morbidity; the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly among young people; and a large unmet need for contraceptive choice and for access to information and services on reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, especially among underserved groups, including refugees, displaced persons, immigrants, young people, single women, indigenous people and persons with disabilities.

ACTION

7. We call for the review of relevant existing legislation in all countries regarding reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, and for the enactment of new laws where necessary.

8. We, the parliamentarians present in The Hague commit ourselves to redoubling our efforts to promote reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, and reproductive rights. In this regard, we will increase the involvement of all stakeholders, including members of civil society, religious leaders, community leaders, political leaders and the media. We will focus particular attention on enhancing the role and responsibility of men in reproductive and sexual health. And we will create and promote an enabling environment through legislation, advocacy and expanded awareness-raising and resource mobilization to ensure that Governments meet their obligations.

(b) Gender and Population

9. The ICPD Programme of Action recognizes the empowerment of women as an end in itself and as being integral to population and development strategies. It also recognizes that the achievement of equality and equity between men and women and the full participation and involvement of women in policy- and decision-making are essential to achieving sustainable development. Crucial to the achievement of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment are the rights of the girl child and education of the girl child. Many countries have taken measures through policy changes and legislation to protect women's rights and to promote women's social, political and economic empowerment. In spite of these achievements, there still remain countries with weak political commitment, little representation of women in senior positions, stereotyping of women in the media and a prevalence of sociocultural attitudes that hamper the empowerment of women.

10. Greater equality for girls is necessary to ensure that as women they will realize their full potential. To this end, access of the girl child to universal education and functional literacy for women are crucial. Both formal and informal education should be provided.

ACTION

11. As parliamentarians, we are committed to removing legal, social and cultural barriers that prevent women from fully participating in society, including policy-making. As a matter of national and international priority, we will support all efforts for legislation, policy-making, implementation and resource allocation to empower women, to achieve greater equality and equity, and to prevent violence against women, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM).

(c) Adolescents, Youth, the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

12. We are witnessing profound demographic changes in the world. The high fertility in the past has given rise to the largest-ever generation of young people aged 15-24. At the same time, as a result of past declines in fertility in many countries with accompanying increases in life expectancies, there is a substantial increase in the number of elderly people aged 60 and over. These increases are challenging the capacity of societies and countries to provide education and reproductive health care for young people and persons with disabilities, and social, medical and financial support for the elderly.

13. We should address, on a priority basis, adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, including unplanned pregnancy, sexual violence, unsafe abortion and STDs, including HIV/AIDS, as well as the provision of appropriate services, sex education and counselling specially suitable for youth and adolescents.

ACTION

14. As parliamentarians, we believe that all Governments and others must give higher priority to the social well-being of adolescents, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities. In this regard, we will urge Governments to undertake necessary reforms in order to increase levels of expenditure for education and health care for these groups.

15. Parliamentarians are urged to take action in meeting the reproductive health needs of youth and adolescents. In this regard, they are called upon to: enact laws; express their commitment; fiscalize reproductive health programmes giving special attention to meeting the needs of adolescents, including HIV/AIDS prevention; increase advocacy; support the provision of information and services; establish links with the human rights movement; and increase networking with NGOs and other members of civil society.

(d) Population, Environment and Food Security

16. Meeting the basic human needs of growing populations is dependent on a healthy environment. Demographic factors combined with poverty and lack of access to resources in some areas and excessive consumption and wasteful

production patterns in others and the lack of appropriate technology cause or exacerbate problems of environmental degradation, pollution and resource depletion and thus inhibit sustainable development.

17. Population growth coupled with the decline in productivity of agricultural outputs, depletion and contamination of fresh water resources, soil erosion and environmental degradation are threatening food supply. Access to food is a basic human right. Every nation must exert efforts to create employment as well as to ensure, where possible, self-sufficiency and to maintain the food supply system utilizing the traditional base of food production. Equally important is the provision of appropriate storage and distribution systems.

18. Women are key contributors in achieving food security, but they lack appropriate technology and adequate resources. Moreover, they often have unequal access to food because of gender biases.

ACTION

19. We call upon parliamentarians and Governments to examine international agreements, including those of the World Trade Organization, and see how such agreements affect agricultural production and environmental quality in their countries. Attention should also be given to trade and non-trade barriers and the effect that they have on developing countries. The rules of international trade must be fully consistent with the long-term perspective of food security.

20. The establishment of a "world food bank" should be considered as an effective global food regime functioning on a cooperative basis to provide equal and just availability of food.

(e) Resource Mobilization

21. At the ICPD, the international community set a global resource target for population and reproductive health programmes, including family planning, for the year 2000 of $17 billion – $11.3 billion to come from domestic funding and $5.7 billion from external donor funding. While many countries, both developed and developing, have increased their contributions to population and reproductive health activities since the ICPD, the target of $17 billion is far from being met -- about 40 per cent shortfall in total, 25-30 per cent in domestic and around 60-65 per cent in external funding. This is one of the biggest challenges for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action.

22. If the goals and objectives of the ICPD are to be achieved in the early decades of the next century, a firm commitment to collective action is essential. Based on the principle of partnership, burden-sharing should be practiced by all concerned. Diversification of sources of support, both domestic and external, should be achieved in the near future.

23. Greater efforts are required in generating public-private partnerships in resource mobilization for the implementation of the Programme of Action and to increase human resources with expertise in population and reproductive health. National information databases to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action are urgently needed.

ACTION

24. We call upon donor Governments and others to increase the flow of official development assistance to the 0.7 per cent target and to devote 4.5 to 5 per cent of it to population and reproductive health.

25. Parliamentarians should encourage budgetary measures directed to population and reproductive health.

26. Governments should decentralize reproductive health programmes and provide the necessary resources.

27. We urge an immediate reassessment of global expenditure in relation to the disproportionate emphasis on military spending at the expense of social needs.

(f) Economic Crisis

28. The effects of recent economic crises have been very severe, including falling gross domestic products, soaring unemployment, rapid inflation, sharp declines in consumption levels and difficulties in servicing external repayments. The implications for health and social sectors have been particularly devastating.

ACTION

29. We urge Governments to take preventive measures against economic crises and to do everything possible to protect the poor from the consequences of an economic collapse.

30. We urge creditor-Governments to re-evaluate debt repayment by developing countries, the poorest countries and countries affected by natural disasters.

(g) Parliamentarians' Networks

31. We recognize the importance of both our individual actions and collective efforts. As parliamentarians, we are the link between peoples and Governments.

32. The parliamentarians' movement on population and reproductive health has started taking root in many countries and at regional and global levels. In this context, we welcome the existence and contribution of national and regional and

other associations of parliamentarians concerned with population and development such as the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG), the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAAPPD), the Working Group on Population, Sustainable Development and Reproductive Health in the European Parliament (EPWG), the Inter-American Parliamentary Union, the Central American Parliamentary Union, the Global Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (GCPPD), the International Medical Parliamentarians Organization (IMPO), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), and the Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU).

ACTION

33. To this end, we shall establish a world-wide network of parliamentarians on population and development not only to exchange information, lessons learned and best practices but also to promote and support legislative decisions, advocacy activities and resource mobilization in all countries to achieve the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action.

34. We shall work for the mobilization of sufficient resources to sustain such a world-wide network of parliamentarians and to ensure its effective functioning.

III. Pledge

35. We call upon national parliamentarian groups to play a more active role in monitoring the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

36. We hereby pledge to translate our personal commitment into collective political action, as set out in this Declaration, both through our national legislation machinery and in other relevant forums. We also call on Governments to meet their duties to the people by effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Ridderzaal Hall
Parliament House Premises
The Hague, the Netherlands
6 February 1999